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Professional Ethics of Marriage Officiants from a Legal Perspective: A Juridical-Empirical Study of Indications of Gratification and Conflicts of Interest in Marriage Services

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Abstract

Public services, including marriage registration, require integrity and professional ethics from state officials to prevent malpractices such as gratification and conflicts of interest. However, empirical reality often shows a gap between legal norms and field practices. This research aims to analyze the professional ethics of marriage registrars from a legal perspective and to examine indications of gratification practices and conflicts of interest in marriage services. The research employs a juridical-empirical method with statutory and sociological approaches, using literature review and interviews with informants at an anonymized Office of Religious Affairs. The findings reveal a gap between ethical norms and practices in the field, indicated by informal giving from the public to registrars and the role of intermediaries in handling administrative procedures, which may give rise to conflicts of interest. These practices are influenced by cultural factors, limited transparency, and insufficient public understanding of official procedures. The study concludes that strengthening oversight, enhancing service transparency, and improving public education are essential to achieving integrity and accountability in marriage services.

INTRODUCTION

Public services are one of the manifestations of the state's presence in meeting the basic needs of the community, including in the religious field (Alamineh et al., 2023; Chapman, 2024; Grossi et al., 2023). One form of such service is the registration of marriages carried out by the head as an authorized state official. In carrying out their duties, the head not only functions as an administrative implementer, but also as a representation of moral and legal values in society. Therefore, integrity and professional ethics are fundamental aspects that must be upheld in marriage services.

Theoretically, professional ethics in public service are rooted in the principles of integrity, accountability, transparency, and professionalism. This concept is in line with the general principles of good governance, which require every state apparatus to be free from the practice of abuse of authority, including gratuities and conflicts of interest. Gratification in the perspective of Indonesian law is understood as a gift in a broad sense that has the potential to affect the independence of public officials in carrying out their duties, while conflict of interest refers to a situation where personal interests have the potential to affect objectivity in decision-making (Corruption Eradication Commission, 2019)

In the context of marriage services, the head as part of the state civil apparatus is bound by legal norms that prohibit all forms of acceptance outside of official provisions. In addition, the principle of public service also requires transparency of costs and procedures so that the

community can obtain fair and non-discriminatory services (Republic of Indonesia, 2009). Thus, normatively (*das sollen*), marriage services should be carried out professionally, free from gratuity practices, and do not contain conflicts of interest in any form.

However, empirical reality (das sein) shows a different dynamic. Based on initial findings in the field, there are indications of the practice of giving from the community to the head after the implementation of the marriage contract which is often perceived as a form of "gratitude". In addition, the emergence of the role of intermediaries in the management of marriage administration—which is known socially—shows that there are practices that have the potential to cause public dependence on certain parties. In some cases, the intermediary sets certain service rates and is suspected of having a relationship with the service provider, which has the potential to cause a conflict of interest.

This gap between legal norms and empirical practice is important to be further studied through a juridical-empirical approach. The gap analysis in this study lies in the difference between legal provisions that prohibit gratuities and conflicts of interest and social practices that still tolerate giving in the context of marriage services. This phenomenon shows that legal norms have not been fully internalized in social practice, so a study that is not only normative but also contextual is needed (Hadjon et al., 2015)

A number of previous studies have discussed issues of public service ethics, gratuities, and conflicts of interest in the bureaucracy. Research on bureaucratic reform shows that transparency and accountability are key in preventing corrupt practices in public services (Sedarmayanti, 2017). In addition, the classic study of corruption also emphasizes that weak supervision and opportunities in the bureaucratic system can encourage irregularities, including in the form of gratuities (Klitgaard, 1988). However, studies that specifically examine the ethics of the head profession in the context of marriage services with a juridical-empirical approach are still relatively limited.

Thus, the novelty (state of the art) of this research lies in the focus of studies that integrate professional ethical perspectives, law, and empirical reality in marriage services. This research not only analyzes the applicable legal norms, but also reveals the dynamics of practice in the field and the factors that influence it, so as to make a more comprehensive contribution to the development of ethical value-based public service law studies.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the ethics of the head profession from a legal perspective and examine the indications of gratuity practices and conflicts of interest in marriage services. In addition, this study also aims to identify the factors that influence the emergence of this practice and formulate improvement efforts to realize marriage services with integrity, transparency, and accountability. The benefits of this research are twofold. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of public service law and professional ethics scholarship by integrating normative legal analysis with empirical social reality, particularly in the under-researched context of marriage registration services. Practically, the findings provide strategic guidance for policymakers, religious affairs officials, and anti-corruption agencies in designing more effective oversight mechanisms, service transparency systems, and public education programs to prevent gratification and conflicts of interest in marriage services, thereby strengthening public trust in religious service institutions.

METHOD

This research is legal research with descriptive-analytical specifications, which aims to provide a systematic overview of the ethics of the head profession from a legal perspective and examine indications of gratuity practices and conflicts of interest in marriage services. The type of research used is juridical-empirical, which is legal research that examines the application of legal provisions in social practice in society. The approaches used include a statutory approach to examine applicable legal norms, as well as a sociological approach to understand the empirical reality that occurs in the field (Soekanto & Mamudji, 2015)

The data collection technique in this study was carried out through literature studies and field studies. Literature studies are carried out by examining primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials that are relevant to the research topic. Meanwhile, field studies were conducted through interviews with informants involved in the practice of marriage services in undercover agencies, to obtain accurate empirical data. The data analysis method used is qualitative analysis, which is by processing and interpreting the data obtained systematically to then draw deductive conclusions, from legal norms to the reality of practice in the field (Sunggono, 2018, pp. 42–45).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The implementation of marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs which is the object of the research shows that administratively it has followed the established procedures, starting from the registration stage, file verification, to the implementation of the marriage contract. In practice, there are several actors involved, namely the head as marriage registrar, administrative officers, and intermediaries who are socially known in the community. The public generally uses intermediary services to facilitate file management and speed up the administrative process, although normatively all procedures can be carried out independently. On the other hand, public perception of wedding services is still influenced by local customs and cultural factors, which in some conditions form a certain pattern of interaction between the community and service providers. This condition is an important basis for understanding the empirical dynamics that occur before further analysis is carried out on the indications of gratuity practices and conflicts of interest in marriage services.

Wedding Service Overview

Marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs which are the object of research (disguised) are basically held based on the applicable legal provisions, both in administrative and substantial aspects. Marriage registration is part of public services in the religious field that aims to provide legal certainty for the marital status of citizens. Within the framework of national law, this service is regulated through various laws and regulations that affirm the importance of marriage registration as a form of legal protection for the parties (Republic of Indonesia, 1974; Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Therefore, the implementation of marriage services at KUA is not only administrative, but also has significant legal and social dimensions in people's lives.

Procedurally, the flow of wedding services starts from the registration stage by the prospective bride and groom by completing various administrative requirements, such as a letter of introduction from the village/sub-district, identity documents, and other supporting

documents. After the files are collected, the administrative officer verifies the completeness and validity of the documents before setting a schedule for the implementation of the marriage contract. The final stage is the implementation of the marriage contract led by the headman, both in the office and outside the office in accordance with the community's requests. This procedure has basically been clearly regulated in technical regulations, so that normatively the entire process of marriage services can be accessed independently by the public without the need for intermediaries (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

In practice, the implementation of marriage services involves several main actors, namely the headman as a marriage registrar who has legal authority in the legalization of marriages, administrative officers who are responsible for file management, and intermediaries who are socially known as marriage modes. The presence of Modin in the social system of society initially functioned as a liaison between society and religious institutions, especially in assisting in the management of marriage administration (Mudzhar, 2020). However, in the development of practice in the field, this role has shifted to become more dominant in the administrative process, so that in some conditions it creates public dependence on intermediary services.

Public perception of wedding services tends to be influenced by factors of convenience, efficiency, and social habits that are developing. Some people view that the use of intermediary services can speed up the administrative process and reduce the complexity of procedures that must be passed. On the other hand, there is also a tendency to increase public awareness to access services independently, especially with the growing digitization of public services. Research on public services shows that information transparency and ease of access are important factors in increasing public trust and reducing dependence on third parties in the management of administrative services (Agus, 2017)

Nonetheless, the dynamics between legal norms and social practices in marriage services suggest a complex interaction between formal regulation and societal culture. On the one hand, regulations have regulated service procedures in a clear and transparent manner, but on the other hand, practices in the field are still influenced by social factors that shape the pattern of interaction between the community and service providers. This condition shows that the success of the implementation of public services is not only determined by the existence of regulations, but also by the degree of internalization of legal norms in society (Bovens, 2014). Therefore, understanding this empirical context is important as a basis for further analyzing indications of gratuity practices and conflicts of interest in marriage services.

Indications of Gratification Practices in Marriage Services

Indications of gratuity practices in marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs (location disguised) appear in forms that are socially considered commonplace, but legally have the potential to cause problems. Based on empirical findings, giving to the head or related parties often occurs after the implementation of the marriage contract, which is perceived by the community as a form of gratitude. This is as expressed by one of the prospective bride and groom with the initials FI in the research area (disguised) in the following interview: "After the marriage contract is completed, we have indeed prepared a certain amount of money to be given to the headman. It is not because it is asked, but it has become a habit in our society as a form of gratitude for helping the wedding go smoothly" (Interview with FI, March 9, 2026). The

quote shows that the practice of giving after the marriage contract is not always driven by explicit requests, but rather influenced by the social construction that develops in society. However, from a legal perspective, the practice still has the potential to be categorized as gratuity if it is related to the position and contrary to the obligations of the recipient.

In addition, there is also a practice of giving that is carried out indirectly through intermediaries such as Modin nikah, which functions as a liaison between the community and the KUA apparatus. In some cases, such grants do not have a clear nominal standard and tend to rely on unwritten agreements or habits that develop in society. This is as expressed by one of the prospective bride and groom with the initials ATH in the following interview: "We use Modin services to take care of all wedding files until the contract. For the cost there are no exact details, it is only conveyed orally and usually includes everything, including for the headman after the event is over." (Interview with ATH, March 11, 2026).

These phenomena show an ambiguity between social practices that are considered reasonable and the legal norms that regulate the prohibition of gratuities for state officials (Republic of Indonesia, 2002).

Another form that is often found is what is called "thank you money", which is given both before and after the marriage contract takes place. Although not always coercive in nature, this practice in some conditions develops into a social expectation that is difficult for society to avoid. In certain contexts, the grant is even perceived as part of an "unofficial fee" that is considered to facilitate the administrative or service process. In fact, normatively, the provisions for marriage registration fees have been clearly regulated in Government Regulation Number 48 of 2014 as amended by Government Regulation Number 19 of 2015, which emphasizes that marriage services at the KUA office on working days and hours are free of charge (Republic of Indonesia, 2014; Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

The factors that cause the emergence of gratuity indications in marriage services cannot be separated from social and structural aspects. In terms of community culture, giving to officials or officers after receiving services is still seen as a form of respect or expression of gratitude, which is rooted in long-standing social norms. In addition, the lack of transparency of information regarding official service fees also strengthens the perception that additional provision is natural. The lack of public legal literacy is also an important factor, because not all service users understand that the practice has the potential to be categorized as a gratuity that is prohibited in positive law. A study in the journal Public Administration shows that low public legal literacy correlates with high tolerance for informal practices in public services (Nurhayati & Safa'at, 2020)

From a legal perspective, the practice needs to be analyzed by referring to the provisions regarding gratuities as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2001 which states that gratuities to civil servants or state administrators who are related to their positions and contrary to their obligations can be considered as bribery if they are not reported (Republic of Indonesia, 2001). In this context, the head as a state apparatus in the structure of the Ministry of Religion has the obligation to reject or report any form of gift related to the duties of his position. In addition, from the perspective of professional ethics of state civil servants, Law Number 20 of 2023 emphasizes the principles of integrity, professionalism, and freedom from conflicts of interest in the implementation of public services (Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

Using the *das sollen* and *das sein* approaches, it can be seen that there is a gap between legal norms and practices in the field. Normatively (*das sollen*), all forms of giving related to state apparatus positions should be avoided or reported according to the applicable mechanism. However, empirically (*das sein*), the practice of giving in marriage services is still ongoing and even in some contexts has become a social custom. In further analysis, not all of these practices contain elements of coercion, but the existence of social expectations can create implicit pressure for people to give something. Therefore, although sociologically understandable, this practice still has the potential to be categorized as gratuity from a legal perspective, especially if it meets the elements of a relationship with a position and is contrary to the obligation of public services that are free of cost and free of interest (Pramusinto & Purwanto, 2019)

Indications of Conflict of Interest in Marriage Services

Indications of conflict of interest in marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs (location disguised) cannot be separated from the existence of intermediaries which in social practice are known as Modin nikah. Functionally, Modin plays a role in helping the community in the administrative process, starting from collecting files, coordinating schedules, to ensuring the smooth implementation of the marriage contract. In certain contexts, the existence of this intermediary provides convenience, especially for people who have limited administrative understanding. However, in practice, Modin also often sets service rates that do not have a standard and are delivered informally to service users. This condition has the potential to create public dependence on intermediaries, so that access to public services is no longer completely direct and transparent (Republic of Indonesia, 2009).

Furthermore, in the relationship between Modin and penghulu, there are indications of indirect relationships that have the potential to cause conflicts of interest. Based on empirical findings, there is a suspicion that some of the rewards received by intermediaries are related to certain parties in the service structure, although this cannot always be explicitly proven. This is as expressed by one of the informants with the initials WR in the following interview: "Usually when we go through Modin, we do not have direct contact with the KUA. Everything has been taken care of, including the cost of the project. We were only told the total, and he said it included everything." (Interview with WR, March 12, 2026).

In addition, in some other information, there is a perception that there is a distribution of rewards in a certain percentage (for example, around 10%), even though the practice is unwritten and not formally confirmed. Therefore, the use of terms such as "indication", "alleged", and "potentially" is important to maintain the objectivity of the analysis while reflecting the limitations of the evidence in juridical-empirical research.

From the perspective of administrative law and professional ethics, these conditions need to be analyzed as potential conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest can occur when a public official has personal interests, either direct or indirect, that can affect objectivity in carrying out his duties. In this context, if there is a potentially mutually beneficial relationship between the intermediary and the KUA apparatus, then it can be categorized as a *conflict of interest*. This principle is in line with the provisions in Law Number 20 of 2023 which emphasizes that civil servants are obliged to avoid conflicts of interest in the implementation of public service duties (Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

In addition, indications of conflicts of interest can also be analyzed within the framework of professional ethical theory, which emphasizes the importance of integrity, independence, and accountability in carrying out public office. The head as an official who has the authority to register marriages should carry out their duties professionally without being influenced by external interests. If there is a relationship that has the potential to affect this independence, then this is not only a legal issue, but also an ethical issue. Recent research shows that conflicts of interest in public services often arise in the form of informal relationships that are not transparent, which can ultimately reduce the quality of services and public trust (Faridah & Mahmud, 2022).

More broadly, from the perspective of good governance, indications of conflicts of interest reflect the application of the principles of transparency, accountability, and integrity in public services is not optimal. Practices that involve intermediaries with unofficial mechanisms have the potential to obscure service standards and open up space for practices that are not in accordance with the provisions of the law. This is contrary to the principles of good governance as stipulated in Law Number 25 of 2009 which emphasizes the importance of transparency, cost certainty, and accountability in every public service (Republic of Indonesia, 2009). Therefore, although empirically the practice is still ongoing and in some contexts considered part of social habits (*das sein*), normatively (*das sollen*) this condition still needs to be criticized and improved to be in line with the principles of good governance and a clean and integrity public service system (Faridah & Mahmud, 2022).

Gap between Norms and Practices (*Gap Analysis*)

Gap analysis between legal norms (*das sollen*) and empirical practice (*das sein*) in marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs (location disguised) showed that there was a significant difference between what should be done and what happened in the field. Normatively, the marriage service system in Indonesia has been regulated in various provisions of laws and regulations that emphasize the principles of integrity, transparency, and accountability. However, in practice, informal patterns are still found that develop in society and have the potential to deviate from the applicable legal provisions.

In the perspective of *das sollen*, the prohibition against the practice of gratuity has been affirmed in Law Number 20 of 2001 which states that any gift to a civil servant or state administrator that is related to his position and contrary to his obligations can be categorized as a criminal act of corruption if not reported (Republic of Indonesia, 2001, Article 12B). In addition, the principles of good public service are also regulated in Law Number 25 of 2009 which emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and cost certainty in every public service (Republic of Indonesia, 2009). In the context of state apparatus, Law Number 20 of 2023 also affirms the obligation of civil servants to uphold integrity and avoid conflicts of interest in carrying out their duties (Republic of Indonesia, 2023). Thus, normatively, wedding services should be carried out professionally, free of unofficial fees, and free from personal or third-party interests.

However, from the perspective of *das sein*, the practice in the field shows different conditions. Based on empirical findings, there are still post-marriage contract givings that are perceived as a form of "gratitude", the use of intermediary services (Modin nikah) with an unofficial payment system, and a lack of transparency related to service fees. This is as

expressed by one of the informants with the initials MAF in the following interview: "If it is not through an intermediary, we are worried that the process will be longer or less clear. So, we chose to use Modin services, even though we must incur additional costs beyond the official ones." (Interview with MAF, March 13, 2026).

The statement shows that informal practices are not only influenced by habits, but also by people's perceptions of the effectiveness of services. In other words, there is a practical rationality that encourages people to continue to use the informal route even though it is contrary to normative provisions.

This gap between norms and practices does not occur by chance, but rather is influenced by several key factors. First, the cultural factor, where giving to officials after receiving services is still considered a form of respect or social ethics. Second, system factors, including the lack of optimal transparency of information related to procedures and service costs. Third, the weak supervision factor, both internally and externally, which causes informal practices to continue without firm action. Research in the field of public administration shows that weak supervision systems and permissive organizational culture towards informal practices are the main factors in the occurrence of irregularities in public services (Prasojo, 2020)

The impact of this gap is quite significant, both from legal and social aspects. From a legal perspective, this practice has the potential to cause violations of the provisions of gratuity and professional ethics of ASN. From the social side, this condition can reduce the level of public trust in service institutions, because the public sees a discrepancy between the applicable rules and the practices that occur. In the long term, if this gap is not addressed systematically, it can hinder the realization of good governance principles that emphasize transparency, accountability, and integrity in the implementation of public services (Robinson, 2015) Therefore, efforts are needed that are not only normative, but also touch on cultural aspects and the supervision system, so that the gap between *das sollen* and *das sein* can be minimized in a sustainable manner.

Prevention Efforts and Solutions

Efforts to prevent indications of gratuities and conflicts of interest in marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs (location disguised) need to be formulated comprehensively by integrating normative and empirical approaches. This recommendation not only aims to close the gap between *das sollen* and *das sein*, but also to strengthen the quality of public services based on the principles of *good governance*. Thus, the solutions offered are not only administrative, but also touch on aspects of community law culture and the integrity of state apparatus.

First, strengthening digital transparency is a strategic step in preventing informal practices in wedding services. The publication of official fees for marriage registration, administrative procedures, and service flows through official social media or KUA's digital platform can increase access to information for the public. This transparency is in line with the principle of public information disclosure as stipulated in Law Number 14 of 2008 and the principle of transparency in Law Number 25 of 2009 (Republic of Indonesia, 2008; Republic of Indonesia, 2009). Recent research shows that the digitization of public services is able to suppress corrupt practices by minimizing direct interactions that have the potential to cause irregularities (Janowski, 2015).

Second, administrative standardization needs to be strengthened through the provision of document formats that can be accessed and downloaded openly by the public. With clear and easily accessible standards, people no longer rely on intermediaries in taking care of marriage administration. This step not only improves service efficiency, but also strengthens the principles of accountability and procedural certainty. In the context of bureaucratic reform, service standardization is an important part of creating a professional public service system that is free from informal practices (Dwiyanto, 2018).

Third, strengthening the supervisory mechanism, both internal and external, is a key factor in preventing irregularities. Internal supervision can be carried out through increasing the control function by the leadership of the KUA and the active implementation of the gratuity reporting system. Meanwhile, external oversight can involve public participation through an easily accessible public complaint mechanism. This is in line with the provisions of Law Number 30 of 2002 (as amended), which emphasizes the importance of community participation in efforts to prevent corruption (Republic of Indonesia, 2002). Empirical studies also show that public involvement in the supervision of public services can increase accountability and decrease potential abuse of authority (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

Fourth, public education is a fundamental step in changing the legal culture that has tended to be permissive towards the practice of "thank you". Socialization regarding the official cost of marriage registration, service procedures, and gratuity prohibitions needs to be carried out on an ongoing basis, both through direct counseling activities and digital media. This effort aims to improve people's legal literacy so that they can understand their rights and obligations in accessing public services. In the long term, this education is expected to be able to shift the paradigm of society from a culture of informal giving to a culture of legal compliance (Prasojo, 2020)

Thus, the implementation of the four recommendations is expected to create a more transparent, accountable, and integrity marriage service system. An integrated approach between system reform, strengthening supervision, and changing the legal culture is the main key in minimizing gratuity practices and conflicts of interest, while strengthening public trust in religious service institutions.

Legal and Ethical Implications

In the practice of marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs (location disguised), empirical findings show that although administrative procedures in general have been carried out according to the provisions, there are still informal practices such as post-marriage contract giving and the involvement of paid intermediaries. This practice is not always understood as a violation by society, but is often considered part of a deep-rooted social custom. However, in the context of the implementation of public services, this condition poses legal and ethical consequences that need to be analyzed in more depth.

This is as expressed by one of the informants with the initials AA in the following interview: "We actually only follow the habits that exist in society. As long as there is no direct request, we consider it as a form of appreciation to the officers." (Interview with AA, March 13, 2026).

The statement shows that there is a difference in perception between the public as service users and the legal framework that regulates the behavior of state apparatus. In this case,

practices that are considered socially reasonable are not necessarily in line with the provisions of the applicable law.

From a legal perspective, these findings show that there is a gap between legal norms and empirical practices that have implications for potential violations of the gratuity provisions as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2001, especially related to gifts related to positions and contrary to the obligations of the recipient (Republic of Indonesia, 2001) In addition, within the framework of state administrative law, the practice can also be associated with violations of the principles of public service delivery as stipulated in Law Number 25 of 2009, which emphasizes transparency, accountability, and certainty of service costs (Republic of Indonesia, 2009).

From the perspective of professional ethics, this phenomenon can be categorized as an indication of a conflict of interest due to the potential for a relationship that is not completely independent between state apparatus and external parties, including intermediaries. In this context, the head as a public official has a moral responsibility to maintain integrity and professionalism in carrying out his duties. Law Number 20 of 2023 emphasizes that civil servants are obliged to avoid conflicts of interest and uphold the basic values of integrity (Republic of Indonesia, 2023). From the perspective of professional ethics, the practice of giving related to positions has the potential to reduce integrity and create a negative perception of public service institutions.

Further analysis shows that this condition is not only related to individual aspects, but also reflects systemic problems in public service governance. These findings show that there is a gap between legal norms and empirical practices influenced by cultural factors, weak supervision, and suboptimal service transparency. In the context of bureaucratic reform, this condition is an indicator that efforts to improve the quality of public services have not been completely successful in eliminating informal practices that have the potential to be deviant. Recent research shows that the success of bureaucratic reform is highly dependent on the consistency of the application of the principles of integrity and accountability at every level of the organization (Prasojo, 2020).

Thus, the legal and ethical implications of these findings are quite significant. From a legal perspective, there is a risk that the practice of giving can be qualified as gratuity if it meets the elements specified in the laws and regulations. From an ethical perspective, this practice has the potential to cause a conflict of interest and reduce the integrity of the head profession. Therefore, it can be concluded that although the practice is still influenced by socio-cultural factors (*das sein*), normatively (*das sollen*) this condition still requires improvement through strengthening regulations, supervision, and internalizing professional ethical values in the implementation of public services with integrity.

CONCLUSION

The research concludes that marriage services at the Office of Religious Affairs have generally been implemented in accordance with applicable laws and regulations; however, in practice there are still indications of gratuities and culturally embedded conflict-of-interest practices, particularly in the form of post-wedding “gratitude” payments and the involvement of intermediaries (*Modin nikah*) operating through informal fee arrangements. These practices highlight a gap between legal norms (*das sollen*) and empirical reality (*das sein*), which, although not always involving coercion, may still fall into the category of gratuities when linked

to official duties and contrary to public service ethics. The findings also suggest that the issue is systemic rather than merely individual, reflecting weaknesses in supervision, service governance, and community legal culture. Therefore, improvements are needed through digital transparency, standardized administration, strengthened oversight mechanisms, and public education to minimize informal practices and reinforce integrity in public services. Future research is recommended to examine comparative cases across different regions and to evaluate the effectiveness of digitalization and anti-corruption interventions in reducing informal payment systems and conflicts of interest in religious public service institutions.

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